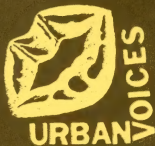


POETRY BY



URBAN VOICES

Illustrations by
MARIE THOMAS



July 31, 1982

Dear Friend,

With great pride and love I present this anthology of poems to the friends, family and loyal supporters of Urban Voices. Your devotion to us during the past two years provided the inspiration needed to develop our creative work.

My kindred spirits and I selected the pieces that have been among your favorites and we trust that they will continue to provide you with pleasure.

May I express my appreciation for bringing life to "Urban Voices." Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne Gadson Brown

Anne Gadson Brown
President

BACKGROUND

Urban Voices was created in July, 1980, through the cooperative efforts of Anne Gadson Brown, Joanne Butler and Marian Crewe.

Urban Voices is a group of poets and artists bound together spiritually for the purpose of sharing their thoughts, ideas and experiences.

The goal of Urban Voices is to reach out to individuals in the elementary and secondary schools, the colleges, the prisons, and the senior and community centers. Our goal will be achieved by:

- Conducting Poetry and Art Workshops and Seminars
- Presenting "Up-and-Coming" Poets and Artists
- Publishing an Annual Anthology
- Developing a Quarterly Journal of Poetry

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"To Touch and Inspire

Creatively, Culturally, and Spiritually"

The Newark Public Library is pleased to have been associated with Urban Voices since its inception two years ago. From a modest program of poetry presented in the Library, Urban Voices has gone on to inspire and entertain many groups throughout the Essex County area.

Prior to the publication of this anthology, the poetry of Urban Voices could only be heard at a particular program. Now in response to audience acclaim, several of the favorite poems of each member of Urban Voices are available in print. The audience for their poetry is broader, and the life of each poem is potentially infinite.

We hope that this will be the first of several anthologies.

Thomas Alrutz
Director, Newark Public Library

Acknowledgments

It is impossible to thank everyone who made this venture feasible. Omissions notwithstanding, special thanks to the Newark Public Library, Gibson and Stapleton Associates, Paula Washington, Doreen Brooks, Russell A. Murray, and the many followers and supporters of Urban Voices.

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INTRODUCTION

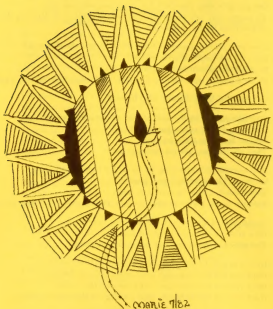
We, the Urban Voices, forever thank our Al-Mighty Creator for giving us artistic talents by which we can share with you our sentiments, our expressions, and our experiences of living in an urban environment.

As you read this book, we invite you to explore the essence of our thoughts. We share with you some of the poems most often requested by our audiences.

May this book bring some joy and happiness into your life.

May you have peace with the universal love that unites us as one.

URBAN VOICES



13 Years Later

Did you get the message? I say, did you get the message!
Holiday as in Holy-day, a day of reflection, set aside remembrance
Give us this day our what! Leaders?

Got george's day, lincoln's day, may day, veterans day
All saints day, ash wednesday, presidential election day, pay day
And still no Martin or Malcolm Day?

Have you got the message, I say have you got the message?
Have all our heroes died in vain?
No gratitude shown to those slain
Us as a people with nothing to claim, ain't important enough, I guess

Let Freedom Ring, bullets rang instead.

Gave the pope a whole week, jimmy carter got 4 years
Had the nerve to recognize gerald ford
Still no Martin or Malcolm Day
They are for real, got the message yet?

Had a world wide mourning for an un-hip hippy beatle boy
He cried, I want to hold your hand
Martin cried, I want to hold your heart
Malcolm cried, I want to hold the gun, knew where folks was coming from.

Martin walked his ass off, while trying to overcome
Give peace a try, then boom bang rang out in the streets
The prince of hope, the man of peace was gone.

Have you got the message, he dun been to the mountain
Have you got the message, gotta make our own heroes
Have you got the message, make our own Holy-Days.
Have you got the message, still waiting for them to say Okay?

Give those folks their holiday, the KKK is here to stay
A bloody holiday ahead, no calendar to remember the dead
And our nation will mourn, not theirs
And we will stay home, and we won't go to work, and yes, we'll
Finally get our day.

Give Peace a Chance, Peace by Piece

The Ballot or the. ?

Zul-Latifa Abdul Sabur Zahir

Anyway

We gonna be here anyway
I mean we gonna be here anyway
Dun been through the Prophets time, in our time
Dun been through Egypts glory time, in our time
Dun been through Adams time, Josephs time, Abrahams time
Moses time and Noahs time
And we doing time in these bad times
And we still in time, keeping time for the last time
And when's the last time you dug the Great Time Keeper
He's the keeper of all time

It's now time for the genocide Boogie Uggie get down
We got polluted times, radiation poisoning times,
KKK on parade times, badd food times, babies blown up
In school times, Black youths missing times, all reported
In the New York Times, ain't it now time to bomb the whole
Damn time?

And we still here,
Daring, defying tremendous times called technology
By the master hypnologist
We so bad, we so swift, so still here
And the planet of the apes is here and now
In time for the revolution, if your watch is set for 1984 time;

And Ezekiel saw the wheel, way up in the middle of the land
Star wars for real, and leprosy throughout the land
Truly a sign for all to see, they claim its age spots,
Liver spots, don't see none on us do you?

And we still here,
Still here, hustle freakout, rollerskating our asses off
Wheaties is the breakfast of champions
Run Jessie Owens, Althea Gibson, and Wilma Rudolph on
Beans and rice, sopping biscuits with syrup.

We still here, yeh, but we ain't loving here
Still here, but ain't loving here or being loved here
So the saying goes, "What goes around comes round"
And I do know with a certainty, that we gonna be
Right here anyway.



Zul-Latifa Abdal Sabur Zahir



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Sanely Insane

Am I insane
Just to want the things that shine;

To hold onto what glitters in the nite
Before the day rubs it out?

Am I insane to want to hold onto the
My home, my land my me?

My insanity, only caused by the unrealness of you!
Playing chess with my people and the chess board
Being A-Mur-der-ca's soil
With African Pieces, we just don't fit.

Am I insane to want to smell the air
That breathed life into my being?
Or feel the soil that suckled me
Back home, the womb of the world, Africa.

Got to be insane,
To look like I look, and act like I act
Wearing all this stuff, here in america

Now you know I'm insane, teaching my seeds
Like I should've been taught
Making them strut, instead of hopping down the street

Whew! They sure make me shine
Look out sun, are you ready for this?
Look out america! You'll never be ready.

To many of us now looking like home
Looking like, Lamumba, Musa, Daud, Ayesha, Amira, Khabirah,
And Kharimeh.

To many of us now talking like El-Hajj Malik
And acting like Idi Amin.

Got to be insane!
To become sane enough
To deal with the truth.

The truth, well, has set me free
To be *insane* *enough*
Just me

And you say I'm insane.

Mad as a white dog out of heat!
Well you're right, insane enough, mad enough
To look like I look and wear this stuff,
And remember Malcolm everyday
Insane!
You gotta be crazy.

Zul-Latifa Abdul Sabur Zahir



I Take It Personal

When you look through
Your whites, From
Behind your Black skin
Hating yourself by
Hating me.

I take it personal

When you give
Your word lightly and you
Take mine with less
Degree.

I take it personal

When you tokenize
Your soul,
For a few pieces of gold.

I take it personal

When you disrespect yourself
By your disrespect for me.

I take it personal

When you take
The fruit of a hard
Day's work from a fellowman.

I take it personal

When you lie
On welfare and envy
Poor widows
Supporting their children.

I take it personal

When you sit back
In comfort,
Satisfied with mediocrity
I take it personal;
Because
I am you and you
Are me.



T. Clay Williams



Marie 6/82

Silk-Stockings

Silk-Stockings Silk-Stockings,
So smooth
So sweet, so soft
So warm.

Relaxed like a new born fawn.
My eyes feasted upon your charm; as
I often rubbed against your leg
At dawn.

Silk-Stockings Silk-Stockings
So smooth
So sweet, so soft
So warm.

Sometimes stretched
Sometimes torn
Still soothing to me
The next morn.

Silk Stockings, Silk Stockings,
So tingling even
Though you are gone.
Silk stockings
So smooth
 So sweet, so soft
 so warm.

T. Clay Williams

A Visit From Her

Africa visited me last night,
My loneliness ended
Quite abrupt.
Her tender strength
Came to me
Filling my emptiness
Stuffing my hungers
Within
Her sweet
Black honey pinked lips.
I kissed them
My malnutrition accentuated
Turning hunger into gluttony.

Last night
Starlight thrilled
Africa gave me her fill.
We communicated conversations
We traversed
Barren desert lands
Then bursted into full bloom
As we danced along
The river interlude
We found destiny
I and she
Last night
Africa and me—
My loneliness ended
Quite abrupt!

T. Clay Williams

Bottoms Up

Once upon a time in the land of TV
A pretty face was the first thing to see,
Times have changed,
The face is last
Now the camera is on the ass.

Marie Thomas

Talk To Me

Talk to me about faraway places
Talk to me about time and places
Talk to me about you and me strugglin'
To find identity.
We'll find ourselves a rainbow,
We'll hitch upon a star
We'll find ourselves a place in space
The journey isn't far. .
Everybody's got a place
Everybody's got a space
To grow in time. . . .

Marie Thomas

Being Cool

Standin' on the corner bein' cool,
Poppin' a few and feelin' new
New like what?
You say your head's ok?
I guess that means you don't go to
School today.
Look at me,
I was once like you
Standin' on corners poppin' a few
Thinkin' it was cool,
Actin' the fool,
And not goin' to school.
Till one day my high was here to stay.
No matter how I cried
I was hooked inside.
I had to go away until I found
Not the street corners, but the corners
Of my mind.
It's fine to be cool,
Don't be no fool
Stay in school.

Marie Thomas





All Because You're Mine

I walked through the door
To find you sitting there.
Your eyes were all aglow.
The sight of you
Brought a smile
To my sad-set face
And filled my heart
With bliss.

There's no wondering
Why I feel this way
It is all so plain
To see,
For when I look into
Your pretty brown face
I see a part of me.

You're so peaceful
Innocent and
Oh, so carefree.
You give me life,
Energy and inspiration,
You strengthen my will for survival.

Only one natural reason
Can truly explain
My glowing and sometimes
Painful love for you
And it's
All because you're mine.

Myron Rodgers

To Savor The Flavor Of Your Insides

I have longed to place
My soft lips
Upon
Your moist lips
To savor, the flavor
Of your insides.

My craving for you
Has been denied
Only because
You're committed
To another.

But commitments
Can be broken
As most always are.

So if by chance
Your love is not cherished
And your heart is broken
Remember,
I'm still here.

For now, more than ever
I long to place
My soft lips
Upon
Your moist lips
To savor, the flavor
Of your insides.



Myron Rodgers

A Stop-Over from Loneliness

Deserted stations
Penn station
After hours
One a.m.
No rush hour
Quiet hour
- Silent night
Holiday night
Lonely night
Lingering on Broad and Market
After hours
Too much to drink
Very little to eat
Just enough money
Forty-five cents
For the ride home.

A place to rest
To lay one's head
One's heart
Warmth from the December cold
A lost and found security blanket
Left from childhood memories
Knowing that you're loved
Feeling free
Not afraid
To love back
In the past there was too little
Now is the time to care
Tomorrow will be too late
To breathe
A breath of fresh air.

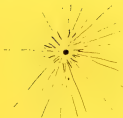
Reborn again, life again, me-again
Open and exposed
Taking the right chance
Alive in your arms
A stop-over from loneliness.

Myron Rodgers

Think Twice

Nigger ain't you tired
Ain't you tired of killing your own
You won't get anywhere anyhow
You know what I am saying.
It's blood money sweat and tears
A hundred years or more of rape, corruption and destruction
Nigger ain't you tired?
Death to you and your kind all through your years.
The rape of our mother country was not enough.
Years of struggle are being ignored
Through your ignorance and greed
Now you, you nigger, you have the audacity
To carry on that will.
Robbing and killing your mother, your father,
Your sister and your brother, from the cradle to the grave.
How long do you think you will get away with your uncle taming games?
Think back you are not the giver or the maker
You are the taker. Your day will be done over and through.
You have a choice to right or wrong.
And if you continue to choose wrong your days won't be long.

Zakiyyah Muhammad



Galaxy

The night is still
And so is the day.

In the inner city of the
Urban Ghetto.

Tonight my friend is the beginning of the end
As a young mother of three
Squeezes a dirty syringe

Her child lies crying
But, she hears him not
As she begins to unwrap the rubber that tightly
Squeezes her arm

Her child lies crying
As she then begins to sway
And nod

She slowly slips into a deep sleep
And unforgettable sleep.

Her child lies crying but,
She hears him not.

And she will never hear him cry again.

Zakiyyah Muhammad

Three
Haiku

Maximum Credible Accident

Silent death creeping
From three mile island's
Weeping radium's leaking.



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Learning Stations

Insert blank tape store data
Year one thru four
Code tape graduate.

Night Life

Bright silvery moon
Riding velvet midnight sky
Mourning comes too soon.



Marian Crewe

Part I

I Am the Fantasy

I am supposed to be the loving one
I must not have problems
My doorstep is where the problems are laid.

I must create atmosphere
Scented baths, satin sheets, lit candles,
Set the flame
Soft perfumed body, stimulating conversation
And the best lover
God ever gave to man.

But I hate it, I hate it all!
I want to bring the problems
Get fat with his baby
Sleep all night in his arms
And let him smell the naturalness of me.

I want the reality.

Part II

I Am the Reality

I wait
Scared to tell you how many times
The baby threw up today

I am on another diet
Maybe this one will work.

Of course I don't have a headache
Oh, but you do.

You have worked four nights overtime already
And it's Friday.

Marian Crewe

Life's Greatest Treasure

One of life's greatest mysteries
That always seem to bring joy,
Is the birth of a little child,
A baby girl or a boy.
The power of God is breathless,
And it's here for all to see.
He is the Creator of man,
The mountains and redwood trees.
A child is life's greatest treasure,
And I'm sure you can't deny.
That if your children were taken,
You would surely want to die.
So I'd like to give thanks to God,
For his love and charity.
I'd be wrong if I didn't thank Him,
For He has done for me.

Sam Burgess, Jr.



Love Thy Children

Children need plenty of love and care,
They need to be taught how to give and share.
Children should be nurtured and brought up right,
Teach them how to read, not how to swear and fight.

It may come somewhat as a surprise to you,
But your child will imitate the things you do.
The Bible says, "Spare the rod or spoil the child;"
Follow this advice, and it will prove worthwhile.

Don't fret if they experience pain or even sorrow,
For the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

Sam Burgess, Jr.

Green Apple

If I had known you yesterday
I may not have you today

For, I was like the newly budded apple
Sweet smelling and green

And would probably have given you
A stomach ache.

Marion Crowe





Tanya

Born of me
But not from me
Love child of my youth

My bounty from the horn of plenty
Tucked in warm fluid love
Rising daily to new heights.

Sweet piscine
Child of my heart
Spinner of dreams

Eyes like deep dark pools
Mirroring desires of yesterday
Holder of dreams of my tomorrows.

Marian Crews

God Has Given Me A Second Chance

God has given me a second chance,
To pull myself together.
I've been through rather stormy times,
But now I see much clearer weather.
There's been many trials and tribulations,
That I have come upon.
And just when I thought there was no hope,
God waved his magic wand.
I'm not too deeply religious,
And I cannot tell you what to do.
But I know that if you put your faith in God,
He will do the same for you.
No matter where I go in life,
Or what I do to try to enhance,
There's something that I'll never forget,
God has given me a second chance.

Sam Burgess, Jr.

Great Expectations

All day long she entertained
The thought of his impending visit
What would he smell like
And what would he say,
Would he wine and dine
Her?
Caress and respect her
Would he murmur sweet nothings
In her ear
And proclaim his affection most
Dear – For the entire world to
Hear?
Would he come a courtin'
In the latest fashions
Carrying roses and expensive
Perfume?
Would his words play on her
Mind,
Like a rapturous wine
And envelop her being toward
Some wild passion overtime?
All day long she entertained the
Thought of his impending visit
At last, he arrived;
He knocked on her door
Wearing soiled jeans, reeking of
Cheap wine, shouting
Unpoetically.
What's happenin' mamma!
Hey mamma, what's happenin'!

James Brown

Mystique

If I try to be romantic
And call you my squeeze
You remind me that brillos are
For squeezing.

So I call you foxy momma
And you say now can I be
Both a fox and a momma
That's inconsistent.

So I call you my girl
And you rap that girl stuff
Is male chauvinistic.

So I simply say
Hey you, come here!
Then you say
Unquestionably
O.K.

James Brown

Encounter

After we had talked
About a Black revolution
And debated the process
Of evolution
Talked of Malcolm, Fanon,
And King
And how each had done
His own thing,
This beautiful sister
So hip and superfly
Blew it all with her
Question,
Hey brother! Do you get high?

James Brown

The Test

There is a method
By which your strategy
In this game of blackness
May be weighed,
Always ask the question
Is this the way Malcolm
Would have played?

James Brown



ronald w/83

Kimberly

Chiseled out of F-I-N-E black
Marble

Tall and willowy skin like
Black satin

Eyes black as coal and warm with
Care

My child's A NATURAL BEAUTY!

Bright and sophisticated

Warm and loving. . . kind and
Considerate

A bit spoiled because of her
Grandmother and. . . me!

She's a real individual with strong
CONVICTIONS

She commands attention. . . just by
Walking; being so alive and full of
JOY. . . Of LIFE

MY CHILD knows her PURPOSE and
PURSUES IT

She's GOD'S greatest GIFT to me

MY KIMBERLY

Ann Godson Brown

Feet

I love Black men
Even though
They make
My feet
HURT!

Ann Gadson Brown

Color Me Tired

Color me sad

Color me MADD, Madd, MADD

Color me tired of male, female relationships

Color me tired of trying to
Understand why my man and I
Can't work things out

Color me tired of being supportive

Color me tired of boosting his ego

Color me tired of taking the blame for
His pain when he can't find a job, and
The MAN has given him a hard time

Color me tired of being his mother,
Instead of his woman and friend

Color me tired of his always trying to
Make me feel inadequate, when it's he

Color me tired of HIS EGOCENTRIC NATURE

Color me tired of giving all until I'm
EMOTIONALLY DRAINED

Color me tired of always having to take
A back-seat to his friends, job and family

Color me tired of his thinking that he's
Always doing me a favor when he calls, takes
Me out, or when he makes love to me

Color me tired of his seeing me as a threat
Or always trying to INTIMIDATE HIM

Color me tired of his being suspicious of me
When another sister has dealt him a low blow

Color me tired of his accusing me of not
Letting him deal with his S-P-A-C-E

Color me tired of his always wanting the
BEST OF TWO WORLDS-S-S

Color me tired of when the relationship's over
He discovers I was the best thing that EVER
Happened to him

Color me sad

Color me MAD-D-D, MADD, MADD

Ann Godson Brown



I know Him

I know him as an aggressive man . . . On the path of life. . .
Devoted to prove himself superior of his kind

I know him as a husband. . . A generous partner, affectionate
spouse. . . Profound is his gift. . . Precious is his sacrifice

I know him as a father. . . Responsible for his offspring. . .
Committed to teach and touch their minds and souls in ways
no other can

I know him as a writer. . . Whose spirit is the pearls of his
thoughts. . . Caught somewhere between the heat of the sun and
the cool of the sea

I know him as a student. . . A drink from the greatest ocean
could never quench his thirst for knowledge

I know him as the dedicated teacher. . . Reaching toward perfection
. . . Daring to engulf and eliminate weakness in his students by
injecting the fruits of his wisdom

I know him as a friend. . . Who tickles my sensitive mind with
loyalty that echoes throughout my most intimate thoughts

I know him as a lover. . . Who with his strength, wisdom and
justice has touched the hearts of many and set the souls of
others free

I know him as a man that I love. . . I admire and respect this
man because he is not controlled by his sins, but rather, his
soul controls the execution of his deeds.

Daphne Benyard

If God Got Depressed

When we get depressed — and this is often true
We neglect the important things — we should do
Now what if God got upset and depressed
This world would be in a terrible mess.

What if God got depressed about the things he didn't like
And when we prayed for help he'd say go take a hike
What a sad day it would be — if God decided to protest
And left it up to us — to keep peace and happiness.

And what if God felt disdained because he wasn't treated right
Then tomorrow morning refused to turn on the light;
Then told Mr. Sun to circle the earth's ring
And scorch and burn every damn thing.

And what if God got distressed over all that's gone wrong
Then milked this land until all the water was gone;
And plagued us with a terrible disease
And sent dust storms in place of a breeze.

What if God — unimpressed over the deeds that we've done
Told Mrs. Hurricane to go have some fun
She'd send gushing winds and giant turfs
Covering every square inch of this fine earth.

And if God got distressed like they said he did one night
And made it rain for 40 days covering everything in sight
The world would be in a Hell-Of-A-Mess
If God got sick and tired of us earthly pests.

We should know for sure — we are truly blessed
And pray don't mope when you get depressed
Just keep in mind when you're feeling blue.

What might happen — if God got depressed
And said that he was through?

Daphne Benyard

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